

she began working in my Saint Joseph, Missouri district office and I know her colleagues there will miss her just as much as I will. While she excelled at every task, in my mind the highlight of Ann's tenure on my staff was her organization of the Tarkio Fly-In on June 5, 2004.

Ann has also excelled outside of the office. She is a graduate of Tarkio High School and the University of Missouri—Columbia. Ann and her husband Matt currently reside in my hometown of Tarkio with their son Aaron, who was born in 2003.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Ann Schlueter for her many important contributions to myself, my staff, and Missouri's Sixth Congressional District. Ann exemplifies the qualities of dedication and service and I am extremely proud of her accomplishments. While she is leaving my congressional staff, I am proud that I will still be able to represent her in the United States Congress.

CONGRESS SHOULD NOT ABUSE
TAXPAYER PRIVACY

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 6, 2004

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in complete support of the unanimous consent agreement to strike the FY '05 omnibus spending bill provision that would allow congressional staff and appropriators access to individual tax returns. But I must point out that Congress has made a similar mistake by dropping from the same bill a House amendment advocated by Representative CAPITO and me, that would have prevented 2.6 million tax returns a year to be turned over to private contractors for the purposes of tax collection. While Congress is attempting to correct what is clearly a bad idea to allow congressional staff and Members of Congress to peruse individual tax returns, taxpayers are also vulnerable to potential abuses of tax return disclosure through private debt collection agents.

Prior to the 2004 election, Congress enacted H.R. 4520, the corporate tax bill that will give the IRS private tax collection authority. The enacted language allows the IRS to use private collection agencies to collect tax debt. This means that up to 2.6 million tax returns—which are currently only scrutinized by federal government employees—will now be open to at least 10 private collection agencies within the first 6 months, and an untold number of private debt collection staff.

While IRS employees are explicitly forbidden from being evaluated on the basis of revenue collected, the private collection scheme would actually link contractor pay to the amount of revenue collection. This policy encourages contractors to use aggressive collection techniques to boost their remuneration. Furthermore, the IRS is currently liable for damages to a taxpayer resulting from the misuse of confidential information by an IRS employee, but taxpayers will not be able to recover damages from the federal government where contractors are guilty of malfeasance.

What's more worrisome is the IRS' inability to oversee the work of these private debt collectors. A 1996 pilot program for private col-

lection was so unsuccessful that a similar pilot program planned for 1997 was cancelled outright. The contractors used in the pilot programs regularly broke the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, did not protect the security of personal taxpayer information, and even then failed to bring in a net increase in revenue.

The IRS has said that it has learned from the 1996 project and is better equipped to address the problems raised. However, even recent evidence is to the contrary. An eye-opening report by the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA Audit #200320010) shows how IRS contractors put taxpayers' data at risk. The TIGTA audit found that the "lack of oversight of contractors resulted in serious security vulnerabilities." The report, found that, "contractors blatantly circumvented IRS policies and procedures even when security personnel identified inappropriate practices."

The objective of the review was "to determine whether the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has adequately protected Federal Government equipment and data from misuse by contractors." The review found: "The involvement of non-IRS employees in critical IRS functions increases the risk of misuse or unauthorized disclosure of taxpayer data, and could lead to loss of equipment or sensitive taxpayer data through theft or sabotage."

Under the current conditions of rampant identity theft and deteriorating privacy here in the U.S., the federal government ought to be strengthening and protecting taxpayer privacy where it can. A first step is to eliminate the egregious provision placed in the Omnibus Bill. But a second, and more critical step, is to abolish the IRS' plan to place 2.6 million tax returns in front of private collection agencies and their staffs. This proposal sets a dangerous precedent down a path of contractor abuse and taxpayer distrust.

I urge my colleagues to join me in the 109th Congress in working with the IRS to find a more effective means of collecting delinquent tax debt collection and avoid this risky scheme altogether.

IN HONOR OF JOHN W. VAN HISE,
JR.

HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 6, 2004

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Commander John W. Van Hise, Jr., upon his retirement after over 35 years of service in the Naval Security Group Reserve. Commander Van Hise has commendably served his country in a variety of assignments at key duty stations around the world. I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations on his retirement, and express my appreciation for his service to our country.

In 1969, Commander Van Hise enlisted in the United States Navy, and after completing Basic Training was assigned to the Russian Language School at Syracuse University. Shortly after, CDR Van Hise served active duty in Japan as an aircrew and plane captain, flying over 100 missions in the Sea of Japan, the Gulf of Tonkin, and off the USS *Coral Sea*. Upon returning to the United States he continued his career in the Naval

Reserve in California. After relocation to Florida, he served as both Training Officer and Operations Officer at the Naval Reserve Security Group in Tampa. In 1986 CDR Van Hise transferred to Charleston and created the first Direct Support Program for Security Group reservists and as a result, was selected as Commanding Officer. Returning to California in 1991, he served two more tours as the Commanding Officer of Naval Reserve Security Group Santa Ana and Naval Reserve Security Group Ft. Lewis, Washington. In 1996, he enrolled in the Naval War College at the Naval Postgraduate School where he graduated with honors in 1999.

In his exemplary career in the Navy, Commander Van Hise has received many promotions, and has been awarded with many honors and medals. His first Navy Commendation Medal was awarded to him after serving as the Operations Officer of the Naval Reserve Security Group San Francisco from 1994 to 1995. In 1995, the Commander was awarded the Joint Commendation Medal by US European Command for his planning and execution of 40 Military-to-Military contact events between Albanian and US forces. He received a second Navy Commendation Medal in 2000 after serving as Action Officer for Joint Secure Communications under the Director of Naval Intelligence.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to personally congratulate Commander Van Hise on his upcoming retirement, and thank him for his dedicated service in the Navy. I wish him the best of luck in his future endeavors.

RECOGNIZING NATHAN OLSON FOR
ACHIEVING THE RANK OF EAGLE
SCOUT

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 6, 2004

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Nathan Olson, a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America Troop 214 and in earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Nathan has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities and earning 30 merit badges. Nathan is an Ordeal member in the Order of the Arrow Camping Honorary and is a Warrior in the Tribe of Mic-O-Say.

For his Eagle Scout project, Nathan supervised the pouring of a concrete slab foundation for the bleachers at St. James Catholic Church baseball field. In addition, he supervised the pouring of two additional slabs for players and coaches to stand behind the backstop.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Nathan Olson for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.